REVISED

DIASPORIC SENSIBILITY IN THE NOVELS OF HA JIN

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Introduction

The history of Chinese literature traces back thousands of years, from the earliest recorded dynastic court archives to the mature vernacular fiction novels that arose during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) to entertain the masses of literate Chinese. The introduction of widespread woodblock printing during the Tang Dynasty (618–907) and the invention of movable type printing by Bi Sheng (990–1051) during the Song Dynasty (960–1279) rapidly spread written knowledge throughout China. In recent times, the author Lu Xun (1881–1936) is considered to be the founder of Baihua literature in China.

In the 20th century, Chinese literature has flourished in the diaspora namely, in South East Asia, the United States, and Europe. Living in France but continuing to write primarily in Chinese, Gao Xingjian became the first Chinese Diasporic writer to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2000. In 2012, Mo Yan another significant Chinese writer also received the Nobel Prize in Literature. In 2015, children's author Cao Wenxuan was awarded the *Hans Christian Andersen Award,* the first Chinese author to win the top international children's book prize (although several Chinese authors had previously been nominated).

As we all know, China is the largest publisher of books, magazines and newspapers in the world. In book publishing alone, some 128,800 new titles of books were published in 2005, according to the General Administration of Press and Publication. There are more than 600 literary journals across the country. Although China is the largest publisher of books, magazines and newspapers in the world, book censorship is widespread in China. Enforcement is strict and sometimes inconsistent. Punishment for violation can result in prison.The

Chinese government is extremely sensitive to any opinions on the politics and history of China and its leaders that differ from currently sanctioned opinions or that discuss topics that are officially taboo.There are so many books and publications that are banned in China.Due to this many writers immigrated to other countries and their works are associated with native culture and background. The diasporic writer few times visualizes his or her Motherland as a place of violence, poverty, corruption and sometimes it is romanticized.

Sensibility refers to delicate yet keen perception of or responsiveness toward something, as when you hear, see, read and think about something. This ability to feel and understand emotions is primarily related to a person's psyche or mindset. That is to say, sensibility is mind oriented and could only be revealed through the person's response to the specific thing through reaction that's springs from his /her psyche. This concept emerged in eighteenth-century Britain, and was closely associated with studies of sense perception as the means through which knowledge is gathered.

Originating in philosophical and scientific writings, sensibility became an English-language literary movement, particularly in the then-new genre of the novel. This concept emerged in eighteenth-century Britain, and was closely associated with studies of sense perception as the means through which knowledge is gathered. It also became associated with sentimental moral philosophy. Such works, called sentimental novels, featured individuals who were prone to sensibility, often weeping, fainting, feeling weak, or having fits in reaction to an emotionally moving experience. If one were especially sensible, one might react this way to scenes or objects that appear insignificant to others. This reactivity was considered an indication of a sensible person's ability to

perceive something intellectually or emotionally stirring in the world around them.

Diasporic Sensibility

When we come to the use of the terminology 'Diasporic Sensibility' it signifies the sensibility of the diaspora towards his/her Motherland. That is the way the immigrant looks at his /her Motherlandfrom the homeland country. In a 2009 interview with The Paris Review, Ha Jin was asked about the difference in Motherland and Homeland. He answered, "China is my Motherland because I was born there and United States is my Homeland because my home is here."

Diasporic writer more often remains in what may be called a state of animated suspension, anxious about his new surroundings, unsure of his affiliations and his roots. In the expatriate condition, there is a loss of geographical markers, de-territorialization that seems unalterable. With this 'de-territorialisation,' there appears a change in individual sensibilities.

As the Diasporic writer experiences cultural, geographical and emotional displacement, there emerges a diasporic sensibility that mirrors the plural identity of the writer. Their writing is characterized by a pluralistic vision. There is a constant shifting between two worlds, voyaging back and forth between two locales.

There are various kinds of diasporas like African, Indian, Jewish, Greek, Armenian, South Asian, Chinese etc. Chinese diaspora are people of Chinese birth or descent who live outside the People's Republic of China (the Mainland, Hong Kong, Macau) or Republic of China (Taiwan).

Diasporic Literature is a very vast concept and an umbrella term that includes in it all those literary works written by the authors outside their native country, but these works are associated with native culture and background. In this wide context, all those writers can be regarded as

diasporic writers, who write outside their country but remained related to their homeland through their works.

The diasporic novel interestingly develops as a sub genre of the novel and explores the realities of diasporic life. The novel with its wide canvas, elasticity and flexibility of form as well as fluidity of time frame skilfully adapts itself to convey the nuances of immigrant life.

Likewise Chinese writers have effectively related their experiences and reflected issues close to their hearts through the medium of the diasporic novel. Each writer has tried to develop his or her story by eliciting material from real life and weaving patterns that bring out the distinctiveness of individual and racial experience. Shain and Barth write, "We define diaspora as a people with a common origin who reside, more or less on a permanent basis outside the borders of their ethnic of religious homeland..."(Shain, 452).The dynamics of the diasporic novel is unique in that they address several issues related to their lived experiences in the host land, their relations with their native land, the conflicts that arise out of the process of negotiating with their multiple identities in an attempt to embrace many cultures. As a literary type, the novel offers the perfect platform to tackle these concerns and reproduce the emotional and sensitive responses of the different diaspora generations at a time when it was sometimes impossible to articulate the same verbally or through any other media.

Life and works of Ha Jin

Ha Jin is the pen name of Xuefei Jin, who was born on 21st February, 1956, in China's Liaoning Province. He grew up during the turbulent years of the Cultural Revolution, served in the army, and completed Bachelor's and Master's degrees in his home country before coming to the United States in

1985 to pursue his doctorate in English at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts. The Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, which roughly coincided with the completion of his Ph.D., convinced Jin not to return to China; he soon began writing in English and searching for an academic job in the United States. In 1993 Jin joined the creative writing faculty at Emory University in Atlanta as an Assistant Professor of poetry. After spending a decade at Emory, Jin returned as a full Professor to the creative writing program at Boston University, where he had previously studied writing.

Jin is a widely acclaimed author of novels, short stories, and poetry. He began his writing career in 1990—just three years before joining the creative writing faculty of Emory University in Atlanta—with the publication of a collection of poems entitled *Between Silences: A Voice from* China *(1990).*

Since that first book, Jin has produced numerous other works, including the poetry volumes *Facing Shadows (1996)* and *Wreckage (2001)*, and the short-story collections *Ocean of Words: Army Stories (1996), Under the Red Flag (1997), The Bridegroom (2001)*, and *A Good Fall (2009).* Jin has also published the novels *In the Pond (1998); Waiting (1999); The Crazed (2002); War Trash (2004); A Free Life (2007),* his first novel set in the United States; *Map of Betrayal (2014); and Boat Rocker (2016).*

Jin is the author of the internationally bestselling novel *Waiting*, which won the PEN/Faulkner Award and the National Book Award, and *War Trash,* which won the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction, and was a Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the Kiriyama Pacific Rim Book Prize; the story collections *The Bridegroom*, which won the Asian American Literary Award, *Under the Red Flag,* which won the Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction, and *Ocean of Words,* which won the PEN/Hemingway Award; the novels *The Crazed* and *In the Pond*; and three books of poetry. His latest novel, *A Free Life*

is his first novel set in the United States. He lives in the Boston area and is a professor of English at Boston University.

Review of literature

Ha Jin has invited scholarly attention of scholars, research students as well as readers for his diasporic writing. Scholars have interpreted his Poetry,Shortstories, Essays and fiction from different points of view.

A few scattered articles have been published on his works. For instance, LezhouSu's Ph. D. thesis entitled *Narrative of Modern Chinese Masculinity in Ha Jin's Fiction (2001)*reflects the Chinese Masculinity in Jin's novels .Secondly , Melody Yunzi Li, in "Home and Identity en Route in Chinese Diaspora: Reading Ha Jin's A Free Life," argues that Jin challenges the limits of identity labels like Chinese, American, and Chinese-American by providing a new type of diasporic identity: "the old world (China) and the new world (America) pushing and pulling diasporas constantly, forcing them to be always en route between the two". Critics also have paid attention to the western influences on Jin's works. For instance, Bettina Hofmann says that Jin appropriates and reforms the western literary genre "Künstlerroman" (artist's novel), a subgenre of Bildungsroman, to represent the realization of the American Dream. Besides identity and genre, there are also discussions on the concept of freedom and the representation of racism in the novel.

The above mentioned review of relevant literature reveals that Jin's novels have certain traits of diasporic sensibility, but they are not explored deeply and extensively. Jin's fictional work appears as a sustained critique on the social, cultural and political issues of Chinese society. However the present researchwork , is not considered an end in itself, but a means, a medium with which the researcher intends to provide a comprehensive and

carefulcriticism of his novels. The researcher opines that most of the existing research is aimed at different diasporic characteristics in Jin's writingand after going through reviews he also believes that Jin's novels need diasporic exploration from different perspectives.

Rationale behindthe selection of the topic

The discussion of the Chinese Diaspora and the review of literature makes it clear that both novelist and critics are focusing more attention on the Diasporic Sensibility of the protagonists,plot, setting and point of view. Considering this importance given to the Diasporic Sensibility of the novelist and protagonists in the novels, it is essential to study Diasporic Sensibility. It is from this perspective that the present study probes into the Diasporic Sensibility in the following novels of Ha Jin.

Novels Selected for the Present Study:

The following novels are selected for the present study

1) ***In the Pond (1998)***

This is the first novel of Ha Jin which is a comic tale about a low-ranking worker at a Chinese fertilizer plant who publishes satiric cartoons about the Communist Party and company officials who have passed him over for a housing upgrade. The novel centers around the character Shao Bin, a Chinese man working at fertilizer plant, and his struggle to obtain a decent apartment for his young family. Continually passed over by the plant's corrupt leaders, Bin decides to fight back against his communist superiors. Conflict ensues when Bin's struggle is met with counterattacks and opposition he could never have imagined. Jin stresses the themes of standing up for one's self and not letting the powerful and corrupt destroy one's dreams. The book also contains universal and humanitarian theme of lending a helping hand to aid one's fellow man.

The book is based on the fact that the people of China are oppressed and kept down by a system that is corrupt from the top down.The author, who immigrated to the United States from China in 1985, is adept at evoking the sheer misery of this place, where most of the workers live in cramped, primitive quarters and look longingly at Workers' Park, the modern apartment compound reserved for favored employees of the local fertilizer factory.

The very first novel displays Jin's Social Sensibility through the protagonist's use of Calligraphy. Shao Bin theprotagonist is fueled by a sense of injustice and decides to use his talents to do something about it. Jin uses this literary work to convey a central political statement against the injustice of Chinese socialism and economics.

2) *Waiting (1999)*

Jin's second novel and most celebrated work, *Waiting*, is the story of Lin Kong, a doctor in the Chinese army torn between his responsibilities to his wife, Shuyu and daughter in the countryside—unwelcome reminders of a loveless arranged marriage—and his girlfriend in the city, an army nurse with whom he has only a platonic relationship because of strict military regulations about fraternization. Chinese law prevents him from divorcing Shuyu without her consent until the couple has been separated for eighteen years. When Lin is finally granted a divorce, he marries the nurse only to find that the long years of waiting have permanently damaged their relationship.

The novel captures the poignant dilemma of an ordinary man who misses the best opportunities in his life simply by trying to do his duty--as defined first by his traditional Chinese parents and later by the Communist Party.According to local Party rules, Lin cannot divorce his wife without her permission until they have been separated for 18 years. Although Jin infuses movement and some suspense into Lin's and Manna's sometimes resigned, sometimes impatient waiting.

This novel is a good example of Social Sensibility. It is set against the background of changing Chinese society. It contrasts city and county life and shows the restrictions on individual freedoms that are a routine part of life under communism.

3) *The Crazed (2002)*

The Crazed, Jin's third novel, concerns a graduate student's academic coming-of-age at the bedside of his mentor and future father-in-law, an esteemed professor whose "crazed" rants while recovering from a stroke reveal far more about himself and the oppressive life of a Chinese academician than the professor intends. The novel chronicles the events in the life of Jian Wan, a graduate student at a provincial Chinese university, in the Spring of 1989, on the eve of the Tiananmen Square protests. Jian is ordered by the Communist Party's secretary of his department to care for his mentor and adviser, Shenmin Yang when the latter suffers a stroke. Herants against an academic life in China, stating that intellectuals are just glorified clerks. This causes confusion and doubt in Jian, who hopes to follow his mentor into academia. Ultimately, Jian decides to abandon the path that he's on and is eventually caught up in the protests of June 1989. The ending is both frightening and hopeful.

This novel displays Jin's Cultural Sensibility. In it through the protagonist he recalls the songs and speeches from China's Cultural Revolution era and uncharacteristically declares for all things communism.

4) *War Trash (2004)*

Jin's fourth novel, Set in 1951–53, War Trash takes the form of the memoir of Yu Yuan, a young Chinese army officer, one of a corps of "volunteers" sent by Mao to help shore up the Communist side in Korea. When Yu is captured, his command of English thrusts him into the role of unofficial interpreter in the psychological warfare that defines the POW camp. Under the

rules of war and the constraints of captivity, every human instinct is called into question, to the point that what it means to be human comes to occupy the foremost position in every prisoner's mind.

As Yu and his fellow captives struggle to create some sense of community while remaining watchful of the deceptions inherent in every exchange, only the idea of home can begin to hold out the promise that they might return to their former selves. But by the end of this unforgettable novel—an astonishing addition to the literature of war that echoes classics like Dostoevsky's Memoirs from the House of the Dead and the works of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen—the very concept of home will be more profoundly altered than they can even begin to imagine.

There is a political or power sensibility in this novel. It is a first person account of Chinese army officers struggle to survive a prisoner-of-war camp after he is captured by Americans during the Korean War (1951-53).Taking us behind the barbed wire, Jin draws on true historical accounts to render the complex world the prisoners inhabit – a world of strict surveillance and complete allegiance to authority.

5) *A Free Life (2007)*

*A Free Life,*Jin's fifth novel, tells the story of an immigrant family who flees China after the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989 and struggles to adjust to American life. The novel's protagonist, Nan Wu, is a scholar and aspiring poet who, along with his wife and young son, is forced to confront a far more mundane existence when he moves to the United States. Over the course of a decade he comes to terms with his new life as a restaurant owner and suburbanite, an experience reflecting that of many upwardly mobile immigrants in metropolitan Atlanta during the 1990s. Though the novel is hardly

autobiographical, critics have noted broad parallels between Nan Wu's experience and Jin's own move from China to Georgia.

Throughout the novel, A Free Life raises the issue of what to do with one's life. Nan Wu deliberately breaks with his past life that would have offered some stability, modest privileges, and material security at the price of political acquiescence and subjugation to an often capricious, arbitrary communist government that subjects its citizens to the petty harassment of its officials.

There is a cultural sensibility in this novel. The protagonist wants to live in freedom, even though this means initial social demotion and cultural alienation and years of financial hardship and struggle.

6) *Nanjing Requiem (2011)*

In this novel author returns to his homeland in a searing new novel that unfurls during one of the darkest moments of the twentieth century: the Rape of Nanjing.In 1937, with the Japanese poised to invade Nanjing, Minnie Vautrinan American missionary and the dean of Jinling Women's College decides to remain at the school, convinced that her American citizenship will help her safeguard the welfare of the Chinese men and women who work there. She is painfully mistaken. In the aftermath of the invasion, the school becomes a refugee camp for more than ten thousand homeless women and children, and Vautrin must struggle, day after day, to intercede on behalf of the hapless victims. Even when order and civility are eventually restored, Vautrin remains deeply embattled, and she is haunted by the lives she could not save.

With extraordinarily evocative precision, Ha Jin re-creates the terror, the harrowing deprivations, and the menace of unexpected violence that defined life in Nanjing during the occupation. In Minnie Vautrin he has given us an indelible portrait of a woman whose convictions and bravery prove, in the end, to be no match for the maelstrom of history.

There is a political and power sensibility in this novel. Here Jin seamlessly blends real and fictional figures and locations to bring us into the center of six weeks of hell on earth. There is a clash between Chinese and Japanese army.

7) *A Map of Betrayal (2014)*

It is a riveting tale of espionage and conflicted loyalties that spans half a century in the entwined histories of two countries—China and the United States—and two families.When Lilian Shang, born and raised in America, discovers her father's diary after the death of her parents, she is shocked by the secrets it contains. She knew that her father, Gary, convicted decades ago of being a mole in the CIA, was the most important Chinese spy ever caught. But his diary - an astonishing chronicle of his journey from 1949 Shanghai to Okinawa to Langley, Virginia - reveals the pain and longing that his double life entailed. The trail leads Lilian to China, to her father's long-abandoned other family, whose existence she and her Irish American mother never suspected.

As Lilian begins to fathom her father's dilemma - torn between loyalty to his motherland and the love he came to feel for his adopted country - she sees how his sense of duty distorted his life.

The novel displays social sensibility. Jin is trying to depict the inner conflict of protagonist between his loyalty to his mother country and the admiration to his new home.

8) *The Boat Rocker (2016)*

Jin's latest novel, *The Boat Rocker*, traces the quest of Feng Danlin, a journalist and sociology professor, to thwart the success of his ex-wife, a highly-acclaimed author and an activist for the Chinese Communist Party. Chinese expatriate Feng Danlin is a fiercely principled reporter at a small news

agency that produces a website read by Chinese all over the world. Danlin's explosive exposés have made him legendary among readers - and feared by Communist officials. But his newest assignment may be his undoing: investigating his ex-wife, Yan Haili, an unscrupulous novelist who has willingly become a pawn of the Chinese government in order to realize her dreams of literary stardom.

Haili's scheme infuriates Danlin both morally and personally - he will do whatever it takes to expose her as a fraud. But in outing Haili, he is also provoking her powerful political allies, and he will need to draw on all of his journalistic cunning to come out of this investigation with his career - and his life - still intact. A brilliant, darkly funny story of corruption, integrity, and the power of the pen, The Boat Rocker is a tour de force.

This novel shows power sensibility. It is about the glories and the limits of the freedom of the press. Jin seems to be using the novel to point out various ways that the government controls all of its citizens.

Significance and Relevance of the Study:

Diasporic literature attracts classes and masses. Diasporic writing occupies a place of great significance between countries and cultures. The present study will help us understand certain aspects of the Chinese Diaspora, which offers useful reflection on the larger issues at hand. This study, the researcher believes will provide a better understanding of the diasporic sensibility of the Chinese writer about his Motherland. The present research is undertaken to bring into limelight the fiction of Ha Jin as some of his novels received awards and adopted for movies.

Objectives of the Study

The present research will be conducted to study:

1. To prepare a theoretical framework of Diaspora in general and Chinese Diaspora in particular for the analysis and interpretation of Diasporic Sensibility in Ha Jin's novels
2. To identify the unique features of Diasporic writing in Jin's novels
3. To make a comprehensive study of Jin's Diasporic Sensibility in his novels

Hypothesis of the Study

The novels of Ha Jin mirror his diasporic sensibility through the visualizations of his Motherland as a place of violence, corruption and subordination and there is inner and outer resistance which is explored through the tension between the individual and the family, the modern and the traditional and the personal feelings and the duty.

Methodology:

Analytical, interpretative and evaluative methodology will be used for the present study

Scope and Limitations of the Study

Novels selected for the study are very famous and have brought the number of awards to the writer. The author is Chinese immigrant to U. S. A., who lives permanently there and shares the experiences in China, his Motherland.

The present study will be limited to the study of Ha Jin's eight novels only as the diasporic sensibility seems to be at the center of each of the novels. Besides the select works, there are several other works of Ha Jin such as short stories and poetry which contains the Diasporic Sensibility but it is difficult to comprise them in a single research design. Hence the focus of study is limited to eight novels.

Tentative Chapter Scheme:

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION :

A. –Life and works of Ha Jin

B. – Research Design

- Hypothesis of the Study
- Objectives of the Study
- Novels Selected for the Study
- Review of the Relevant Literature
- Chapter Scheme

Chapter -II Diasporic Sensibility: Theoretical Framework

1.1.- Introduction

1.2- Diaspora: Origin& Definition

1.3- Chinese Diaspora

1.3.1.-History of Chinese Diaspora

1.3.2. - Chinese Diasporic Literature: A Brief Review

1.4- Diasporic Sensibility

1.4.1-Origin & Definition

1.4.2- Use of Diasporic Sensibility in Literature

Chapter- III Socio-Economic Sensibility in*'In the Pond', 'Waiting'& 'A Map of Betrayal'*

Chapter- IV Cultural Sensibility in 'The *Crazed' &'A Free Life'*

Chapter-V Political or Power Sensibility in'*War Trash', 'Nanjing Requiem' and 'The Boat Rocker'*

Chapter VI– Conclusion

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